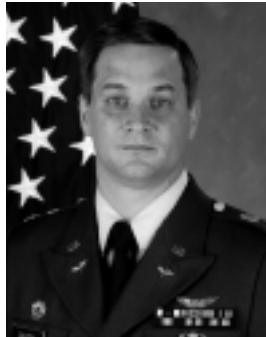


How would you describe your experience in the Army Acquisition Corps and what suggestions do you have for improving the program?

COL William M. Gavora
Former Project Manager
Aviation Systems
Program Executive Office
Aviation

I have been a member of the AAC since its inception and believe that the Congress was correct when it required the Services to establish professional acquisition programs with specific training, education, and experience standards prior to service in positions designated as critical. By and large, the system has worked well and as expected. The AAC has made great strides in the development and utilization of civil servants; however, the main deficiency, in my view, is the lack of a credible plan on the utilization of former civilian PMs [program, project, and product managers].



LTC Scott E. Shifrin
Product Manager
Stinger Missiles and Platforms
Short Range Air Defense Project
Office
Program Executive Office (PEO)
Air and Missile Defense

My acquisition experiences have been very rewarding as I was blessed with a significant number of "grooming" assignments working in a variety of different PEOs, joint assignments, and at HQDA. I have gained many different perspectives, insights, and experiences regarding "the art of acquisition" as viewed from different organizations and levels of command. These developmental acquisition assignments centered on learning about the acquisition process (the model); understanding the bureaucracy, regulations, and acquisition methodology; and how the Army really operates at the HQDA level. In general, I believe the acquisition



community is taught to operate within the bounds of the regulations and to maintain the "status quo."

I believe the members of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) have a significant opportunity to be at the forefront of transformation and provide premier leadership to the Army and make a real difference on the battlefield and in the lives of the soldiers we support. To accomplish this, both civilian and military AAC members must lead from the front and create an atmosphere that tolerates and promotes new and more efficient ways of doing business. The way we operated in the past is no longer good enough. A majority of today's programs are time- and resource-constrained and require nontraditional solutions, with acquisition leaders who are relentless in challenging the current process. We must groom our future AAC leaders to become risk takers, bold and aggressive, solving difficult problems using "out-of-the-box" solutions. We must use the Army transformation process as the catalyst to seize the initiative and challenge the status quo. We are no different from the regular Army. We, as a community, are expected to police our own, set high standards, and provide an atmosphere for nontraditional solutions and problem solving. I would not trade my experiences in the Acquisition Corps, nor would I trade the military experience and leadership opportunities I gained while part of the Army prior to entering the Acquisition Corps.

MAJ William M. Boruff
Executive Officer
Acquisition Support Center

To date, the Army Acquisition Corps has been a challenging and rewarding way of life. I was accessioned in 1995 following 2 years of command in the 101st Airborne (Air Assault). My first assignment was at Fort Bragg, NC, as a Contingency Contracting Officer (CCO). I became a CCO team member who prepared for worldwide deployments within 24 hours



notice. Within 10 months I had earned my warrant and was an active member of one of the three CCO teams.

At about my 1-year point, I was given the opportunity to deploy to United States Support Group-Haiti (USSG-Haiti) to serve as the Chief of Contracting. This was an extremely exciting and challenging assignment working in a joint contracting environment for a Marine Commander and Deputy Commander. Members of the construction team on the ground were Navy Seabees, and our office consisted of Army and Air Force contracting officers. The contracting missions on the ground became very interesting as we worked through interpreters to ensure the specifications the customers ordered were met to standard. The missions stayed constant throughout my 179-day tour from November 1996 through April 1997. One of the most interesting experiences of this tour was a contract termination. The contractor had not met the desired delivery dates and USSG-Haiti could not get behind on construction tables. In this type of sensitive diplomatic contractor base, the balance of providing a fair termination to the contractor while ensuring USSG-Haiti received fair compensation was very exciting. I can clearly say that the contracting officers who had the opportunity to work those negotiations learned valuable lessons that have made them better officers.

Upon completion of my tour at Fort Bragg, I attended a fully funded master's program, which is a wonderful opportunity for Army Acquisition Corps members. As such, I would encourage interested officers to apply.

My suggestion to improve the Army Acquisition Corps is for the Army to increase awareness of all the great services the Acquisition Corps provides the Army as a whole. These services range from contingency contracting support to the new weapons and other systems provided to the field to ensure our Army remains the most elite army in the world. The Army Acquisition Corps is clearly a force multiplier because of all the professional support we provide. The bottom line is for the Army in general to better understand what the Army Acquisition Corps provides—outstanding support and systems!

Mary McHale
Acquisition Proponency Officer
Acquisition Support Center

As a well-known credit card company boasts, "Membership has its privileges." My membership in the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) has helped me achieve certain personal career objectives that I otherwise would



not have been able to secure. As a member of the AAC, I applied and was selected for the AAC's Long Term Training (LTT) Program, which enabled me to complete my master's degree during duty hours. The LTT Program reduced some of the stress associated with working full time, attending graduate school, and rearing an active family. Since graduating and returning to my current position in the Acquisition Support Center, I have been able to apply what I learned in school. Additionally, the Defense Acquisition University training I have received since the 1991 implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act has enabled me to broaden my knowledge and interest in both my primary and other acquisition career fields (ACFs). Through participation in continuous learning activities, I have been able to maintain currency in my primary ACF, participate in various leadership opportunities, and further develop myself professionally. These activities, coupled with the diverse acquisition assignments that I have been afforded, have helped me grow into a professional acquisition manager who is well-equipped to support the current and future acquisition challenges of our warfighters. With the privileges of membership come certain obligations. I view these as challenges that I am honored to meet.

The AAC offers many other career development opportunities (education, training, and experience) to its military and civilian workforce. Initiatives such as the Competitive Development Group Program help eliminate some of the traditional "stovepiped" career approaches that civilian workforce members experience. Such broadening opportunities should be considered for expansion to lower-graded/-paybanded employees. Additionally, the AAC and other Service components must continue to concentrate on attracting, recruiting, and retaining our future acquisition workforce. Colleges and even high schools should be targeted to market acquisition as an important and rewarding career move. Likewise, midlevel recruitment needs to be refined so that new applicants with industry experience can be easily assimilated into the Army's acquisition workforce.

While I have benefited from various opportunities offered by the AAC, I recognize that the AAC is not about me personally—it is about how the entire acquisition, technology, and logistics community can best support the warfighter through the planning, acquisition, and lifetime support of critical systems, products, and services. The AAC accomplishes this mission by providing its workforce world-class education, training, and experiential opportunities.